

Roger Brooke Taney to Andrew Jackson, May 28, 1838, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

ROGER B. TANEY TO JACKSON.

Baltimore, May 28, 1838.

My Dear sir, It is long since I have written to you, much longer than I intended, but I still hoped when I did write to say to you that I was coming this summer to the Hermitage, and to name the time when you might expect me. And being most anxious again to have the pleasure of seeing you, I have put off writing to you from day to day, still indulging the lingering hope that circumstances would allow me to pay you my promised visit. But I now find it will be impossible this summer, and that I must employ this sea[son] in settling and arranging some private affairs which will not admit of further delay. Many years ago I became the trustee for the settlement and distribution of my fathers estate among his representatives, and after I went to Washington the exciting public scenes in which we were engaged, put my private concerns out of my mind, and I find that nothing so soon gets into confusion, or requires more time and patience to set to rights again, than the accounts of a trust estate in which many are interested. I had hoped to be done with it this spring, but I have been in court here the greater part of my time since I left the supreme court and closed it only the day before yesterday. Tomorrow I must go to Delaware, and when I return must busy myself with the settlement of my trust concerns. I am indeed grieved that I must give up for this summer my visit to you, for it has been one of my cherished hopes to have the pleasure of seeing you at the Hermitage. Yet I trust we shall both be spared to another season, when I hope, no new disappoint[ment] will prevent me.

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I still employ such leisure as I have in sketching the scenes at Washington in the panic war. When I see you I shall bring them with me for I should like you to look at them. I have not done much with it yet, for I did not begin until last fall, and from the 1st of Novr. until about the first or middle of June my duties in court are exceedingly laborious and fill up most of my time. But my summer is a season of leisure and I mean to work at my history as much as I can.¹

¹ Perhaps the manuscript mentioned in note 3 on p. 495, *ante*, was a part of this intended book.

I am sorry to see affairs are going badly with our friends at Washington. I am not enough in the way of information to judge what is operating in other places but I am sensible that our friends here have lost ground from the want of confidence in the management of the Treasury Department. The stoppage of specie payments did the administration no harm here, for the people had the good sense to impute it to the true cause. And in the elections in last october our friends were stronger in this state than they had been for many years. But they have manifestly been losing ground ever since. I think nothing has done them so much harm as the paying out bank notes and depreciated Treasury notes to the creditors of the government, especially to those whose claims arose from burdensome duties, such as jurors, witnesses etc. Mr. Woodbury ought to have issued his notes from the first at six pr ct. interest and if he [had] done that, he would soon have had specie for them. And the people generally are not willing to admit that members of Congress are to be paid in specie while 37 small claimants are to be paid in notes of banks. I see by the papers it is said he is appointed Chief Justice of New Hampshire, and the impression here is that he will accept.² I hope he will, for he is an honest man, and a good Lawyer, and will doubtless make a most diligent Judge. And I fear he is altogether unfortunate in his plans where he now is. . . .

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2 Secretary Woodbury declined this appointment and continued as secretary until 1841.